

## MISSION OF PICTURES.

### DIVINE SERVICES IN THE BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

American Cities Need Great Galleries of Paintings—Men of Wealth Should Buy in the Place of Their Residence Thrones for American Art.

BROOKLYN, Oct. 28.—The Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D. D., preached at the Tabernacle this morning. A vast congregation attended the service. The pastor expounded a chapter about the room of imagery in Ezekiel, after which the hymn beginning:

Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love,  
But there's a nobler rest above.

was sung. Professor Browne presided at the grand organ and rendered a concerto in B flat by Handel. The subject of Dr. Talmage's discourse was "The Divine Mission of Pictures." His text was Isaiah, chapter 2, parts of the twelfth and sixteenth verses: "The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon all pleasant pictures." He said:

Pictures are by some relegated to the realm of the trivial, accidental, sentimental or worldly, but my text shows that God scrutinizes pictures, and whether they are good or bad, whether used for right or wrong purposes, is a matter of divine observation and arraignment.

That the artist's pencil and the engraver's knife have sometimes been made subservient to the kingdom of the laud is frankly admitted. After the ashes and scoria were removed from Herculaneum and Pompeii the walls of those cities discovered to the explorers a degradation in art which cannot be exaggerated. Satan and all his imps have always wanted the flinging of the easel; they would rather have possession of that than the art of printing, for types are not so potent and quick for evil as pictures. The powers of darkness think they have gained a triumph, and they have, when in some respectable parlor or public art gallery they can hang a canvas embarrassing to the good, but fascinating to the evil.

It is not in a spirit of prudery, but backed up by God's eternal truth, when I say that you have no right to hang in your art rooms or your dwelling houses that which would be offensive to good people if the figures pictured were alive in your parlor and the guests of your household. A picture that you have to hang in a somewhat secluded place, or that in a public hall you cannot with a group of friends deliberately stand before and discuss, ought to have a knife stabbed into it at the top and cut clear through to the bottom and a stout finger thrust in on the right side, ripping clear through to the left. Play, the elder, lost his life by going near enough to see the inside of Vesuvius, and the further you can stand off from the burning crater of sin, the better. Never till the Books of the Last Day are opened shall we know what has been the dire harvest of evil pictures and unbecoming art galleries. There is a man's imagination, and he becomes a moral carcass. The shop windows of English and American cities in which the low theatres have sometimes hung long lines of bronzes actors and actresses in style insulting to all propriety have made a broad path to death for multitudes of people. But so have all the other arts been at times suborned of evil. How has music been dragged! Is there any place so low down in dissoluteness that into it has not been carried David's harp and Handel's organ and Gottschalk's piano and Ole Bull's violin, and the flute, which though named after so insignificant a thing as the Sicilian eel, which has seven spots on the side like blue holes, yet for thousands of years has had an exalted mission. Architecture, born in the heart of Him who made the worlds, under its arches and across its floors what bacchanalian revelries have been enacted! It is not against any of these arts that they have been so led into captivity. What a poor world this would be if it were not for what my text calls "pleasant pictures." I refer to your memory and mine when I ask if your knowledge of the Holy Scriptures has not been mightily augmented by the woodcuts or engravings in the old family Bible, which father and mother read out of, and laid on the table in the old homestead when you were boys and girls. The Bible scenes which we all carry in our minds were not gotten from the Bible typology, but from the Bible pictures. To prove the truth of it in my own case, the other day I took up the old family Bible which I inherited. Sure enough, what I have carried in my mind of Jacob's ladder was exactly the Bible engraving of Jacob's ladder; and so with Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza; Elisha restoring the Shunammite's son; the massacre of the innocents; Christ blessing little children; the crucifixion and the last judgment. My idea of all these is of the old Bible engravings which I scanned before I could read a word. That is true upon nine-tenths of you. If I could swing open the door of your foreheads I would find that you are walking picture galleries. The great intelligence abroad about the Bible did not come from the general reading of the book, for the majority of the people read it but little, if they read it at all; but all the sacred scenes have been put before the great masses, and not printer's ink, but the pictorial art, must have the credit of the achievement. First, painter's pencil for the favored few, and then engraver's plate or wood cut for millions on millions! What overwhelming commentary on the Bible, what reinforcement for patriarchs, prophets, apostles and Christ, what distribution of scriptural knowledge of all nations, in the paintings and engravings thereof of Holman Hunt's "Christ in the Temple," Paul Veronese's "Magdalen Washing the Feet of Christ," Raphael's "Michael, the Archangel," Albert Durer's "Dragon of the Apocalypse," Michael Angelo's "Plagues of the Fiery Serpents," Titmore's "Flight into Egypt," Rubens' "Descent from the Cross," Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," Claude's "Queen of Sheba," Bellini's "Madonna at Milan," Orsagna's "Last Judgment," and hundreds of miles of pictures if they were put in line, illustrating, displaying, dramatizing, irradiating Bible truths until the Scriptures are not today so much on paper as on canvas, not so much in ink as in all the colors of the spectrum. In 1833 forth from Strasburg, Germany, there came a child that was to eclipse in speed and boldness and grandeur anything and everything that the world had seen since the first color appeared on the sky at the creation, Paul Gustave Dore. At 11 years of age he published marvelous lithographs of his own. Saying nothing of what he did for Milton's "Paradise Lost," emblazoning it on the attention of the world, he takes up the book of books, the monarch of literature, the Bible, and in his pictures, "The Creation of Light," "The Trial of Abraham's Faith," "The Burial of Sarah," "Joseph Sold by His Brethren," "The Brazen Serpent," "Boaz and Ruth," "David and Goliath," "The Transfiguration," "The Marriage in Cana," "Babylon Fallen," and 300 scriptural scenes in all, with a boldness and a grasp and almost supernatural alacrity that make the heart throb, and the brain reel, and the tears start, and the cheeks blanch, and the entire nature quake with the tremendous things of God

and eternity and the dead. I actually staggered at the steps of the London Art Gallery under the power of Dore's "Christ Leaving the Praetorium." Profess you to be a Christian man or woman, and see no divine mission in art, and acknowledge you no obligation either in thanks to God or man?

It is no more the word of God when put before us in printer's ink than by skillful laying on of colors, or designs on metal through incision or corrosion. What a lesson in morals was presented by Hogarth, the painter, in his two pictures, "The Rake's Progress" and "The Miser's Feast," and by Thomas Cole's engravings of the "Voyage of Human Life" and the "Course of Empire," and by "Turner's Slave Ship." God in art! Christ in art! Patriarchs, prophets and apostles in art! Angels in art! Heaven in art!

The world and the church ought to come to the higher appreciation of the divine mission of pictures, yet the authors of them have generally been left to semi-starvation. West, the great painter, toiled in unappreciation till, being a great skater, while on the ice he formed the acquaintance of Gen. Howe, the English army, and was gradually coming to West as a skater, they gradually came to appreciate as much that which he accomplished by his hand as by his heel. Poussin, the mighty painter, was pursued, and had nothing with which to defend himself against the mob but the artist's portfolio, which he held over his head to keep off the stones hurled at him. The pictures of Richard Wilson, of England, were sold for fabulous sums of money after his death, but the living painter was glad to get for his "Alecnyon" a piece of Stilton cheese. From 1650 to 1660 there were 4,000 pictures willfully destroyed. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth it was the habit of some people to spend much of their time in knocking pictures to pieces. In the reign Charles the First it was ordered by parliament that all pictures of Christ be burnt. Painters were so badly treated and humiliated in the beginning of the Eighteenth century that they were lowered clear down out of the sublimity of their art, and obliged to give minute accounts of what they did with their colors, as a painter's bill which came to publication in Scotland in 1707 indicated.

The painter had been too long up some old picture in the church, and he sends in this itemized bill to the vestry: "To filling up a chink in the Red Sea and repairing the damages to Pharaoh's hosts; 'To a new pair of hands for Daniel in the lion's den, and a new set of teeth for the lions; 'To repairing Nebuchadnezzar's beard; 'To giving a blush to the cheek of Eve on presenting the apple to Adam; 'To making a bride for the Good Samaritan's horse, and mending one of his legs; 'To putting on a new handle on Moses' basket and fitting bulrushes, and adding more fuel to the fire in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace." No painters were humiliated clear down below the majesty of their art. The oldest picture in England, a portrait of Chaucer, though now of great value, was picked out of a lumber garret. Great were the trials of Quentin Matsys, who toiled on from blacksmith's anvil till as a painter he won wide recognition. The first missionaries to Mexico made the fatal mistake of destroying pictures, for the loss of which art and religion must ever lament.

But why go so far back when in this year of our Lord 1888, and within twelve years of the Twentieth century, to be a painter, except in rare exceptions, means poverty and neglect? Poorly fed, poorly clad, poorly housed, because poorly appreciated! When I hear a man is a painter, I have two feelings: one of admiration for the greatness of his soul, and the other of commiseration for the needs of his body. But it has been in all departments of noble work. Some of the mightiest have been hardly tested. Oliver Goldsmith had such a big patch on the coat over his left breast that when he went anywhere he kept his hat in his hand closely pressed over the patch. The world renowned Bishop Asbury had a salary of \$64 a year. Painters are not the only ones who have endured the lack of appreciation. Let men of wealth take under their patronage the suffering men of art. They lift no complaint; they make no strike for higher wages. But with a keenness of nervous organization which almost always characterizes genius, these artists suffer more than any one but God can realize. There needs to be a concerted effort for the suffering artists of America, not sentimental discourse about what we owe to artists, but contracts that will give them a livelihood; for I am in full sympathy with the Christian farmer, who was very busy gathering his fall apples, and some one asked him to pray for a poor family, the father of which had broken his leg; and the busy farmer said: "I cannot stop now to pray, but you can go down into the cellar and get some corned beef and butter and eggs and potatoes, that is all I can do now." Artist and farmer may wish for our prayers, but they also want practical help from men who can give them work. You have heard scores of sermons for all other kinds of suffering men and women, but I think this is the first sermon ever preached that made a plea for the suffering men and women of American art. Their work is more true to nature and life than any of the masterpieces that have become immortal on the other side of the water, but it is the fashion of Americans to mention foreign artists, and to know little or nothing about our own Copley, and Allston, and Lunan, and Greenough and Kensett. Let the affluent fling out of their windows and into the back yard valueless dainties on canvas, and call in these splendid but unrewarded men, and tell them to adorn your walls, not only with that which shall please the taste, but enlarge the mind, and improve the morals, and save the souls of those who gaze upon them.

Brooklyn, and all other American cities, need great galleries of art, not only open annually for a few days on exhibition, but usually for a few days on the city where you live what W. W. Corcoran did for Washington, and what I am told John Wannamaker, by the donation of De Munsey's great picture "Christ before Pilate," is going to do for Philadelphia. Men of wealth, if you are too modest to build and endow such a place during your lifetime, why not go to your iron safe and take out your last will and testament, and make a codicil that shall build for the city of your residence, a throne for American art! Take some of that money for mind and soul as well as body! Who will do for Brooklyn or the city where you live what W. W. Corcoran did for Washington, and what I am told John Wannamaker, by the donation of De Munsey's great picture "Christ before Pilate," is going to do for Philadelphia. 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